

## are you ready for this? by GhostGrantaire

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### Author's Note:

For Dana! Go follow her on tumblr @kirayukimuras

### *September 1984*

"Hey Mom, I'm going to the movies tonight, so I won't be back until late," Steve reminded his mother as he walked out of the kitchen. Jackie Harrington had only gotten home an hour ago from work, but was currently hunched over a case file in the dining room. She was never that great at separating her personal and professional lives.

"Oh? With Natalie?" She didn't look up from her work.

"*Nancy*," he corrected for what had to be the thousandth time. He tried not to let it get to him. They'd never cared about his past girlfriends, so it made sense Nancy wouldn't be their exception. "And yeah, she'll be there."

"Alright dear," she responded in that lovely parent voice that's used for phrases like "that's nice, dear." She still didn't look up. He didn't know why he bothered anymore. He could stay out the whole night with Jonathan and Nancy and she probably wouldn't even notice until he was late to dinner the next evening.

"When's Dad coming home?" He asked on a whim.

"Who knows?" She muttered back bitterly. Well at least it was a reaction. "I'm sure *Ms. Marilyn* is keeping him quite busy at the office."

She sneered the nickname waspishly, and he sighed at the mention of his dad's "coworker." It wasn't exactly Julia's fault her last name was Monroe, but that didn't stop his mother from calling her Marilyn every chance she got. But then again, Steve really didn't care about the reputation his father's mistress had.

"Okay, I'm gonna go get ready to leave."

He began to leave the room when his mother suddenly lifted her head and looked at him with wide eyes. *Oh no*, he thought, already getting a bad feeling about that look.

“Steve,” his mother started, pushing her work to the side. “You’ve been with Nancy a long time now, haven’t you?”

“Um, yeah,” he responded cautiously. “Ten months or so.”

His mother nodded thoughtfully, and he knew that her mind was whirring. “You’ve never dated anyone for that long before.”

Steve scratched the back of his neck awkwardly. He knew that fact all too well. Nancy was, well, Nancy. It was different with her. It always had been, even before the whole monster-killing-thing. “Yeah, I guess not. I like her.”

*Understatement of the damn century.*

His mother brightened, clasping her hands together. “Well I think it’s time your father and I met her properly. Over dinner. How does Thursday sound?”

Steve blinked. “What?”

She rolled her eyes impatiently. “Dinner, Thursday, all of us! Your father would love to meet your girlfriend, I’m sure, and I know I would too.”

*Thursday.* He sighed as he put the pieces together. His father had gotten in the habit of “working late” on Thursdays, but if they had dinner plans, there was no way he wouldn’t show up. It was exactly the kind of trick his mom would like to pull.

But at the same time, he wondered if it was weird that he hadn’t brought Nancy home yet, or at least, home when his parents were there. He didn’t usually introduce his girlfriends to his parents, but his mom was right-- he didn’t usually date people for more than a few months. Nancy had met his parents a couple of times before at back-to-school night or his Christmas party, but it had been nothing more than a “hello, goodbye” before Steve pulled her away.

"I'll ask her," he offered, not wanting to commit to anything yet.

"Good," his mom said with a firm nod. She looked at him for a moment, tilting her head to the side in observation, a crease forming between her eyes. "You need a haircut."

With that, she went back to her reading until Steve got the message and went upstairs.

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He forgot all about the conversation until Tuesday afternoon, after school had gotten out for the day. He was sitting in the front seat of his car, which was currently parked behind a Denny's. Nancy was sitting in his lap, her hands tangled through his hair as she kissed him eagerly.

They didn't do this often, mainly because they'd gotten in the habit of spending most of their free time with Jonathan. The three of them were still navigating the ins and outs of that friendship, but Steve didn't get the feeling that making out with Nancy whenever Jonathan was in the room would make the boy like him any more. And while he loved spending quality time with his girlfriend, he found that never resented Jonathan's presence. In fact, he encouraged it. He wasn't sure why, and he didn't really care to read into it, but it was better when it was the three of them. It just was.

That being said, he'd never get tired of *this*. In the list of most amazing things this world had to offer, kissing Nancy Wheeler had to be in the top three.

Steve was kissing down her neck when suddenly a thought occurred to him, and he pulled away with great difficulty.

Nancy frowned down at him. "Why'd you stop?" she asked breathlessly, and *god* that voice was such a turn on for him. He took a breath, pushing those thoughts out of his mind for a second.

"I had something to ask you, actually," he said slowly.

Nancy let her hands drop to her sides, and leant back against the steering wheel, looking curious. "Okay."

Steve frowned, not quite sure what he was doing. "My mom wants to invite you to dinner." It sounded more like a question than an statement.

Nancy blinked, clearly surprised. "Oh," was all she said.

He felt the need to explain. "I mean, I think it's more about giving my dad a real reason to show up to dinner, but I don't know, I mean, we've been dating almost a year, right? I guess it makes sense that they want to meet you. Not that you haven't met them before, but I suppose she wants to do it properly."

Nancy nodded slowly. "Yeah, that makes sense."

Steve coughed, glancing away from his girlfriend's eyes. "I mean, if you don't want to go, I can totally make something up. She'll probably forget about it in a week--"

"Do you want me to go?" Nancy asked, bringing his eyes back to her. She looked earnest and expectant.

"I'm the one asking you, aren't I?" he grumbled back, not sure what else to say.

Nancy rolled her eyes. "You said your mom wants to invite me to dinner. You didn't say anything about what you want. So?"

Steve shifted uncomfortably beneath her. "I don't know. I mean, like, I've met your parents and everything, and hell I'm basically living in your house half the time, and I guess--"

"Steve." Nancy cut him off. She leaned closer to him, a small smile on her lips. "Do you want me to meet your parents? Formally?"

Steve swallowed. "Yeah. Yeah I do."

Nancy grinned and kissed him again, and he responded eagerly. He weaved his hand through her hair, which she had just cut short the week before. After a second he pulled back again.

"I'm not guaranteeing it won't be a mess, my parents are crazy."

“Shut up and help me think of what to wear.”

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Steve was on edge for the entirety of Thursday. Nancy spent the whole lunch reassuring him that it would be fine with Jonathan chuckled at them over his sandwich. Steve, who didn't understand what was so amusing about his panic, glared at Jonathan until he rolled his eyes and looked away.

He had an off period that day so he went home early, stopping by the store on the way home to get flowers and ingredients for dinner. He'd told his mom he'd be in charge of food for the night, so he got to work on the pasta and salad as soon as he could. Working in the kitchen calmed him somewhat, and he was grateful for the distraction.

His parents arrived home from work at 5:30, just like they'd promised, and both of them disappeared into their room to change. They didn't offer to help, but he didn't mind. He wanted to be in control of as many things as possible, not wanting to leave anything to chance.

He couldn't believe he was so nervous. It was just one dinner--people did things like this all the time. But he'd always kept his parents separate from Nancy and Jonathan, and the idea of those two worlds overlapping for a whole night gave him goosebumps.

The dinner preparation went smoothly. He cooked the sauce just like he'd learned at the Wheelers a couple weeks ago, and it smelled great. He was going to have to thank Karen for the recipe. He set everything out on the table, making sure the plates and silverware were in the right places before darting up the stairs to get ready. He didn't think too much about the clothes, just throwing on some black pants and pulling on a clean shirt, and then moved onto his hair, spending at least twenty minutes making sure it looked perfect.

Nancy was scheduled to arrive at 7, and the doorbell rang at 6:58. Steve felt his heartbeat speed up instantly as he went to open the door.

As soon as he saw Nancy, he felt a calm rush over him. She looked

beautiful. Her short hair was curled and pinned out of her face, and she was wearing a plaid skirt and blue sweater that brought out her eyes. He smiled at her, leaning against the doorway in an attempt to look charming.

“Hey,” he greeted her, hoping his voice didn’t sound shaky.

“Hey yourself,” she answered, standing on her tiptoes to kiss him chastely.

“You ready?” He asked her softly after they broke apart, and she squeezed his hand in response. He grinned and led her through the living room to the dining room where his parents were talking.

“Mom, Dad, you remember Nancy?” He introduced. His parents stopped speaking and turned to the pair, both smiling.

“Hi, Mrs. Harrington, Mr. Harrington,” Nancy greeted politely, shaking both of his parents’ hands with a smile. “Thank you for having for me over.”

“It’s our pleasure, Nancy,” Steve’s mother responded happily. “It’s about time we did this, don’t you think?”

“Of course,” Nancy said in response.

“Well why don’t we eat before the food gets cold? Steve worked very hard on dinner. He was quite determined,” Jackie said, raising an eyebrow at her son, and Nancy giggled. Steve smiled at his mom. Sometimes he forgot how warm she could be when she had an audience.

They sat down at the table, Sean and Jackie sitting across from the young couple. There was a moment that Steve had to take in the setting around him. He could barely remember the last time all three of the Harringtons had eaten dinner together in their own home. He hid a smile, strangely content to be there with his family.

They passed the serving dishes around quickly enough and filled their plates with food, making small conversation about “how was your day” and “did you get here alright” and such. Steve wanted to dig in and see if it was good, but he held back, subconsciously waiting for

Nancy to go first.

Nancy took a bite of pasta, making a noise of satisfaction. She swallowed and smiled at him. "This is great, Steve. Karen would be proud."

Her voice was teasing, but Steve grinned at the compliment, feeling immensely proud of himself.

"Karen?" His mother asked as she served herself salad. "Who's Karen?"

Nancy blinked, a bit caught off guard. "Oh," she explained with a laugh. "My mother. It's a bit of a joke between us, since she's been teaching Steve to cook for a while. I never liked cooking, so she's thrilled to finally have a willing student."

Steve chuckled to himself, taking a bite of food. *It was good.*

"You don't like cooking?" Sean asked, frowning at Nancy.

"Not really, it's not really my specialty," Nancy admitted with a sheepish smile. Steve smirked at her. She wasn't lying-- she was far too impatient to follow a recipe, and didn't have the proper instincts to follow her gut.

Sean kept frowning. "You know, that's an important skill for a young woman to learn."

Steve blinked, unable to help the slightly shocked look he cast as his father. *Why did he have to go there?* He stole a look at his girlfriend, who looked more than a bit embarrassed.

"Yeah, I guess," Nancy answered awkwardly. Steve bit his lip, feeling nervous again. It wasn't like his father had any room to talk anyway-- he didn't know shit about cooking.

"Maybe I'll get the hang of it soon," Nancy spoke up again with a relaxed smile. He mirrored it, and his father looked pleased as well.

"So how long have you two been together now?" Jackie asked, looking between them with interest.



Steve glanced at Nancy, smiling crookedly. She blushed, looking back at him. "It'll be a year in November," he answered, and Nancy nodded happily.

"That's a long time," his father noted, looking proud. "You know, you're the first girl Steve's brought home to meet us. You must be something special."

"She is," Steve added immediately, not taking his eyes off of her. Nancy looked at him, her eyes widening a bit as she blushed, like she still couldn't believe how cheesy he was. He grinned back at her unabashed.

"So Nancy, you're a senior right?" Jackie asked conversationally. Steve tried not to be annoyed with the question. He must've told his mother than twenty times.

Nancy luckily didn't seem bothered, just replying in the affirmative.

"How's the college process going? Have you decided on all the schools you'll apply for?"

Nancy nodded, taking a sip of water before responding. "I think so," she answered. "I'm still finalizing the list, but I have a pretty good idea. Now it's just a matter of getting all the applications done."

"Good," Sean spoke up from the head of the table. "Do you have a top choice school?"

Nancy shrugged. "Right now I'm leaning towards UPenn. If I get in, of course."

"That's a prestigious school," his mother said with a nod, but Steve just rolled his eyes.

"You'll get in," he assured her, not a doubt in his mind. He looked back at his parents. "Nancy's a genius, Mom, she's at the top of the class."

"I'm in the top *ten*," Nancy protested, but Jackie was already smiling proudly.

"That's wonderful," she said, and Steve grinned proudly at Nancy.

"It's a shame she hasn't rubbed off on you more, Steve." Steve looked over at his father, who was staring back at him with raised eyebrows. "Your grades haven't been looking too good recently."

Steve frowned. "Yeah, but--"

"I don't know how you're planning on getting into Notre Dame with the way you're going. You'd better have one hell of an essay planned," Sean continued, looking at him intensely.

Steve bit back his reply, not wanting to explain for the millionth time that he didn't want to go to Notre Dame. His father only wanted him to go there because it was his alma mater, but Steve honestly couldn't care less about that school.

"Yes sir. I'm trying," he said obediently. He didn't dare look at Nancy, not wanting to see her reaction to his father lecturing him about grades. They all knew Steve's grades couldn't even compete with Nancy's, but they didn't *talk* about it, besides the times that Jonathan and Steve would tease her for being a genius.

"Well try harder," his father said unsympathetically. Steve took a large bite of pasta so he wouldn't have to respond. "Maybe you should tutor him, Nancy."

For the love of god, could his father humiliate him more if he tried? He winced at the question, waiting uncomfortably for Nancy's response.

"Oh, well, we're um," Nancy started awkwardly, pausing to clear her throat. "I mean, we're not really in all the same classes, and..."

She trailed off. Steve looked over at her, cringing when he saw her glancing around and shifting in her seat.

His mother suddenly spoke up, and he'd never been more relieved to hear her voice in his whole life. "What are you planning on majoring in, dear?"

"Oh!" Nancy exclaimed, clearly thrilled at the change of subject.

"I'm not completely set yet, but I'm leaning towards cognitive science. It's always been fascinating to me."

"Wow," Jackie replied, leaning back in her seat. "That's quite something."

"I don't imagine there are many women in that field," Sean commented, taking a sip of his wine. "Won't be easy, I'm guessing."

The comment annoyed Steve, but Nancy didn't seem bothered. "I suppose not, but a lot of schools have programs and stuff to encourage women in STEM fields. I'm hardly the first."

"Well good for you," Jackie said with a smile. Nancy smiled back, clearly pleased with the comment. His mom finished off her drink before pouring herself another glass. "So you mentioned Penn. Any other schools in mind?"

"I was thinking about California schools for a while, Stanford and Caltech, you know, but I'm not sure I want to be so far away from home." She glanced at Steve towards the end of her answer, and he frowned. They hadn't talked much about her school choices, but he wondered if her decision to stay closer to the East Coast had anything to do with him.

"California's pretty cool, though," he commented, not sure why. Nancy gave him a strange look, and he turned to his dad, hoping to change the subject. "You and Mom went a couple years ago, right?"

Sean nodded, looking past him to Nancy. "San Francisco," he clarified. "The weather was great, but the city was a bit... interesting. Some of the people were odd, you know Californians. We ran into a group of men wearing dresses one day. One of them had hair that looked a bit like yours, Steve."

Steve stared at his plate, grinding his teeth together. "Dad--" he started, ready to launch into yet another conversation about style and keeping up with trends. His dad still combed his hair like it was the 1940s.

"I'm just saying you could do with a haircut," his father cut in,

stabbing some lettuce onto his fork. "You need to think about how you present yourself. You're starting to look like a queer."

Steve's stomach clenched uncomfortably at the word and he took a deep breath. He'd never dare argue back, especially not in front of Nancy, but it was hard to hold back sometimes. He tightened his hand around the fork he was holding. His father didn't seem concerned in the slightest, and his parents went back to eating without comment.

A foot knocked against his under the table. He glanced at Nancy, who was watching him with the most adorable frown on her face. When he met her eyes, she smiled, a glint in her eyes.

*I like it*, she mouthed discretely, eyes flitting up to his hair, and he grinned at her.

"Steve, take your elbows off the table," his mother scolded from across the table, and he rolled his eyes but obeyed anyway.

There was a break in conversation as they ate, and his parents chatted about work shortly between each other.

"Oh, you know who I ran into this week?" Sean spoke up, looking at Steve. "Bob Harding."

*Oh great*, Steve thought with a sigh. "Yeah?" he asked, trying to look interested.

"Mhm, he says Tommy's planning on going to IU next year." Sean commented, and Steve just hummed at the mention of his old friend. Sean frowned slightly, looking suspicious. "He said he hasn't seen you in quite some time."

Steve picked at his sleeve awkwardly to avoid meeting his dad's eyes. It wasn't like it was a secret. It just... hadn't come up. He had to hold back a laugh. In ten months, the fact that he was now enemies with his former best friend hadn't come up. One more way the Harringtons stood out. "Me and Tommy don't really run in the same circles anymore."

"Tommy and I, Steve," his mother corrected.

“That’s a shame,” Sean continued, his frown deepening. “Bob’s one hell of a businessman, you know.”

“Sure,” Steve responded, not sure what else he was supposed to say to that. Figures his dad would care more about his own connections than Steve’s social life.

“Are him and Carol still dating?” Jackie asked with interest.

“Um, yeah, I would think so,” Steve muttered, completely uninterested in this entire conversation.

“That’s nice. I always liked her, she’s such a sweet girl. Nancy, are you two friends?”

Steve choked on the piece of pasta he was chewing and coughed loudly. His mother sent him a disapproving look, but Steve couldn’t care less. The idea of Nancy and Carol being *friends* was so ridiculous he barely kept himself from laughing. He grabbed at his water glass and took a large gulp to clear his throat.

Nancy was staring at Steve, a stiff expression on her face, and he knew she was barely holding back her own laughter as well. She coughed quietly before responding. “No, not really.”

She didn’t add anything else, no explanation or reasoning, and Steve got the feeling that was for the best.

There was a silence before something occurred. He grinned at his girlfriend. “Hey Nancy tell them about what you worked on over the summer!”

Nancy shot him a look but began to speak anyway. “We-- my brother and I-- tried building robots. He was always really into stuff like that, so we turned it into a summer project.”

“*And* they actually got one to work pretty well,” Steve finished the story when Nancy didn’t, rolling his eyes at her modesty. He remembered how excited her and Mike had gotten when they’d finished the damn thing. “It was awesome.”

“Well that’s... interesting,” Sean said, blinking in confusion. “Where

did you find the parts?"

Nancy smiled at the memory. Steve knew how much fun she'd had hanging out with her brother that summer. "All over the place. I also worked at RadioShack for a couple of months over the summer so I bought some things with a discount, and they gave me some broken parts and stuff for free."

Nancy talked about the logistics behind the project for a while, clearly proud of her work, and Steve was happy to listen.

After that the conversation weaved in and out, mostly led by Nancy and Jackie. Steve spoke up occasionally, but he enjoyed listening to his girlfriend speak, and wanted her to take the lead when she wanted to. His father stayed quieter, usually interjecting questions or changes of subject when necessary.

By around 8:10, they'd all just about finished their food. Despite the awkward moments and passive aggressive comments from his parents, the evening had gone reasonably well, and Steve was much more relaxed.

"So what movie did you end up seeing over the weekend?" Jackie inquired. Steve was honestly surprised she ever remembered that.

"There was nothing good showing. We ended up watching Poltergeist on VHS at Nancy's place," Steve explained.

"I hadn't seen it before," Nancy added on.

"Is that one of those horror movies? I don't like those," Jackie said, shaking her head.

"Yeah, Nancy doesn't either," Steve said. Nancy looked at him, playfully annoyed, and he snorted at her. "You were about to run out of the basement."

"That's only because *you* were trying to scare me!" Nancy shot back.

Steve laughed at the memory of the other night. "It was hilarious!" He turned to his parents, who were watching the scene blankly.

“Okay, so Nancy’s parents were at dinner, so we were watching her younger siblings, and it was time for baby Holly to go to sleep, so I volunteered to put her to bed since I’d seen the movie before. But there’s this one line in the movie where this little girl-- who first off looks *a lot* like Holly-- says ‘they’re here’ and it’s really creepy, so I got this idea, and instead of putting her to bed we snuck back downstairs and Holly is *amazing* and manages to sneak up right behind Nancy and whisper it into her ear, and Nancy completely freaks out...”

He had to stop to laugh for a second at the image. Nancy was laughing at this point as well, her irritation all but erased. She really had freaked out, falling off of the couch and screaming so loudly that Mike had run up from the basement in terror.

“And then--” he continued again, leaning forward in excitement.

“Steve, elbows!” His mother cut in sharply. She looked distinctly annoyed. “Honestly, where are your manners? You know how I feel about that.”

Steve’s elbows slipped off the table. His energy was suddenly gone, and he blinked, unable to remember what he was going to say.

“And then?” His father prompted, though he didn’t seem very interested.

Steve shrugged, frowning. “Um, it was just really funny, I guess.”

Nancy offered a smile, clearly trying to pick up the energy of the conversation again. “You know, I wasn’t the only scared one. Jonathan looked like he was going to throw up for like a whole minute.”

Steve snorted, remembering how terrified Jonathan had been. He’d joined in the laughter as well, though not before punching Steve solidly in the arm. It still hurt.

“Jonathan, he’s your brother?” Jackie asked for clarification.

“Oh, no he--” Nancy stopped, frowning. “Our friend, Jonathan?”

Her voice was expectant, like she was waiting for his mother to catch on, but Jackie continued to frown.

“Sorry, Jonathan who?” Jackie cut in, looking back and forth between them with a bewildered expression.

Steve felt like his chair had been pulled out from underneath him as he stared at his mom. Nancy was quiet beside him, and he could feel her gaze on his neck.

Maybe he should’ve mentioned the fact that he had never in his whole life mentioned the name Jonathan Byers to his parents.

The idea of lying flitted across his mind, but there was no way Nancy would ever forgive him if he lied point blank about their best friend. The idea made him sick anyway. He wasn’t ashamed of Jonathan. He could do this.

“Jonathan Byers, Mom,” he answered after a long second, attempting to sound casual.

He heard Sean set his silverware down on his plate, a quiet noise that held got all of Steve’s attention immediately.

“Byers?” His father’s voice was completely neutral, and Steve forced himself to look up. There wasn’t any real expression in his eyes, but Steve knew what that meant. “I didn’t realize the two of you were friends.”

Steve swallowed. “It’s a new thing.”

“Is that right.” It wasn’t a question, and it took all of Steve’s willpower to keep from looking away from his father’s stare. His father’s gaze was like a 3-ton-weight he was trying to hold above his hands, and he felt like he might give out at any minute.

Somehow he made it, and Sean broke first, looking towards Nancy. “You’re also friends with Jonathan?”

Nancy blinked, looking completely taken off guard. “Um, yes sir.”

His father gave a sharp hum and returned to his food. The four of



them sat in silence for a moment that seemed indefinite. His mom didn't seem as put off as his father, but Steve could tell she didn't seem pleased.

"Jackie, how is that latest case coming?" Sean asked suddenly, voice too loud.

His parents talked about work for about ten minutes, and Nancy and Steve listened in silence. He could tell she was uncomfortable, and he didn't blame her. She had finished eating, so Steve grabbed both of their plates and took them into the kitchen.

After rinsing the dishes off and stacking them into the dishwasher, he grabbed his car keys from the counter and walked back into the dining room.

"I should drive Nancy home, before it gets too late," Steve said. He didn't look at his parents, staring instead at Nancy, who looked incredibly relieved.

"Right," Nancy agreed quickly, jumping to her feet as well. "I don't want to worry my mom."

"Yes, alright," Jackie said, giving a clearly false smile to the girl. She got to her feet and held out her hand again, and Nancy shook it hesitantly. "I'm glad you could come. We should do it again sometime."

"Of course," Nancy responded with a nod. She turned to Sean, who had gotten to his feet but made no move to shake her hand.

"It was nice meeting you, Nancy," he said politely with a sharp nod. She gave him an unsteady smile, and Steve took that as his cue to lead her to the door.

The air was cool outside, and Steve took a deep breath as soon as the door shut behind them. They walked to the car in silence, and didn't speak until they began driving.

"So," Nancy started unsurely, and Steve tensed immediately. He braced himself for whatever she was about to say. "The stuff about Jonathan..."

"I'm sorry," he blurted out immediately. He couldn't look at her. He already knew how much of a coward he was compared to her, but the idea that he was so scared of his father's opinion that he'd lie about his best friends? It was pathetic, and he knew it.

"I--" Nancy stopped in the middle of her sentence. "Why are *you* sorry?"

She sounded genuinely confused, and he spared her a glance before turning back to the road resolutely. He shrugged, not sure how to respond. *Sorry I can't compare to you, Nance.*

"If anyone should be sorry it's me," Nancy said when it was clear that Steve was staying quiet. "I didn't mean to put you in that position. I shouldn't have assumed--"

"That I would've told my parents about my best friend?" he finished for her sarcastically, snorting. "Yeah, that's quite a leap, Nance."

He looked at Nancy, who was smiling as she stared at the road. It was the same smile she always got whenever Steve said something like that about Jonathan, like she still couldn't believe they'd managed to work out such strong a friendship between them. Sometimes Steve couldn't believe it either.

After a second she turned to him, smile slipping away. "Is it gonna be a problem? He didn't seem happy."

Steve sighed as he rounded a corner. "You know my parents. They're all about reputation. The Byers are some of the last people they'd ever willingly associate themselves with. But it's not a big deal. It's not going to change anything for us."

Nancy still seemed troubled. "Still, I don't like causing problems for you--"

"Nancy the last thing you do is cause problems," Steve reassured her, reaching for her hand and clasping it between their seats. "I promise."

They stayed quiet for the rest of the drive, and Steve couldn't help but replay the night in his mind over and over again. He still

couldn't believe some of the comments his parents had made, and the more he thought about it, the more mortified he became.

Finally they pulled into the Wheeler's driveway. The lights were still on inside, and Steve could just picture the family going about their lives together. They weren't a perfect family, not even close, and he'd listened to Nancy complain about her parents more time that he could count, but his heart ached at the very idea of them. At least they could bicker and tease each other without the world ending. At least they *knew* each other.

"Well, thanks for coming, I guess," Steve muttered, resisting the urge to hide his face in his hands. Nancy smirked softly at him, clearly sensing his distress, her hand hovering about the button on her seatbelt.

"Hey," she spoke up after a second. "Why don't we do something this weekend? Just the two us. A proper date."

"Yeah?" He asked, tilting his head at her. She smiled, looking amused.

"Yeah. It'll be nice. We could go get dinner, get you out of the kitchen for a while," she teased, and he grinned in response, nodding his head.

After a second, Nancy snorted as if remembering a bad joke, and let her head fall to her hands.

"What?" He asked, chuckling even though he didn't know what she was on about.

"I'm sorry, I just remembered your dad's face when I told him I didn't like cooking." She laughed through the words.

Steve laughed and let his head fall back to the seat, even though he was more horrified than anything else. "Oh my god."

"He looked like I shot a puppy," Nancy continued, eyes wide like she couldn't believe it had really happened.

"Not a puppy, just his son's masculinity," Steve teased back. "I'm

telling you, he had a sudden nightmare of us ten years in the future where you come home from a long day at work and I'm slaving away in the kitchen wearing a pink frilly apron."

Nancy laughed even louder, and he couldn't help but join her.

"Man, that was a disaster. I'm sorry I made you come," he told her. He really was sorry. Nancy shouldn't have had to listen to any of that nonsense. He was used to it by now, but he didn't have to subject her to it.

"I'd go again in a heartbeat," she said, calming down.

"Is that right?" Steve asked, smirking at her slightly.

"Yep," Nancy replied without hesitation. "Your parents may be a bit weird, but you're not too bad."

Steve grinned at her, a happy, relaxed feeling washing over him. Nancy unbuckled her seatbelt and grabbed his collar before leaning in to kiss him. Steve let his eyes close as he kissed her back, wondering if he was ever going to get tired of this feeling.

When they broke apart, Steve leaned his forehead against hers, smiling softly. "I love you, Nancy Wheeler."

"And I love you, Steve Harrington. Crazy parents and all."

### **Author's Note:**

I basically had to relive the worst parts of family dinners to write this. It was painful.

I hope you liked it, please please comment, it would make my day!

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